



18 March 1970

The Honorable Gerard Smith
The Director of the Arms Control
and Disarmament Agency
Washington, D. C. 20451

Dear Gerry:

We have reviewed with interest your "Soviet Planner's View" paper on United States MIRV capabilities forwarded under your memorandum of 26 February. As the enclosed paper indicates, we think that your presentation represents an imaginative effort to point out the fears about United States MIRV capabilities that "worst case" reasoning by the Soviets could produce, but we also have reservations on some specific points. We hope our comments are helpful.

Sincerely,

Richard Helms
Director

Enclosure
Comments on ACDA Memorandum

OD/OSR: [redacted] March 1970

Rewritten: RHelms/ecd - 18/3/70

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: CIA Comments on ACDA Memorandum, "Soviet Planners View of U.S. MIRV Counterforce Capability," February 11, 1970

1. This represents an imaginative effort to show how the Soviets, if they were to apply "worst case" reasoning to US MIRV programs, could come up with the same kind of concerns that have been expressed in this country about potential Soviet counterforce capabilities. Soviet suspicions on this score almost certainly have been aroused by official statements about the potential hard target capabilities of US MIRV's as well as by the emphasis which has been placed here on the possibility of a Soviet first strike. It is quite possible that Soviet military analysts have in fact done some rough calculating along the lines indicated in the ACDA paper.

2. Unfortunately, the calculations used in the ACDA paper do not, in our view, make a completely convincing case. The discussion of the relative advantages of MIRV's and single RV's under (a) and (b) is generally persuasive, but the .75 kill probability of the cross-targeted Minuteman III with three RV's is not good enough for first strike purposes unless one assumes that something like the equivalent of two or more Minuteman III's (each with three RV's) can be targeted against each Soviet ICBM silo. We also have some questions as to how certain of the numbers used were derived and think the paper would benefit by the inclusion of details on this point.

3. More importantly, case (c) contains some key assumptions no Soviet planner is likely to advance seriously as representing a probable or expected threat--not only that yield has been raised by 25 percent but also that both the readiness and the reliability rates will be 100 percent. The

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case (c) scenerio also assumes, contrary to publicly available information, that all of the Polaris submarines can be refitted with Poseidon missiles. The 10 oldest boats can't.

4. We don't think this kind of exaggeration is needed to convey the point that the Soviets probably do see considerable cause for concern as they look to the future. If their machine simulations of a nuclear exchange are anything like those done in the US, they could indicate a serious deterioration of relative Soviet capabilities against a MIRVed US force in the 1970's.

5. Finally, we would point out that the Soviets would not necessarily find the line of reasoning used in case (c) to be persuasive. In view of the risks and uncertainties involved, they might well doubt the ability and willingness of the US to adopt a surgical first strike strategy, even if it had sufficient weapons. Their official line, reiterated at Helsinki, continues to be that it would be suicidal for either side to launch a nuclear war.

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